



Inspection Report on

TACT (The Adolescent and Children's Trust)

**The Adolescent & Childrens Trust
303 Hither Green Lane
London
SE13 6TJ**

Mae'r adroddiad hwn hefyd ar gael yn Gymraeg

This report is also available in Welsh

Date Inspection Completed

04/10/2023

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About TACT (The Adolescent and Children's Trust)

Type of care provided	Fostering Service
Registered Provider	The Adolescent and Children's Trust
Registered places	0
Language of the service	Both
Previous Care Inspectorate Wales inspection	19 June 2018
Does this service promote Welsh language and culture?	This service is working towards providing an 'Active Offer' of the Welsh language and demonstrates a significant effort to promoting the use of the Welsh language and culture.

Summary

The Adolescent and Children's Trust (TACT) is an independent, national registered charity which provides fostering services across, England, Scotland and Wales. TACT Cymru operates fostering services in Wales. The fostering agency closed all of their offices, and they are an all-Wales home-based service.

TACT is a service which is committed to promoting children's well-being. Children live with foster carers who understand their needs and promote their rights and entitlements. Their needs are known and understood, and they have access to education and health services in line with their care and support and placement plans. They are supported to maintain significant relationships and to have fun and take part in social and leisure activities.

Foster carers are well supported and motivated, they are supported by experienced staff who provide regular supervision and annually review their approval. The service provider has identified foster carer and staff core training needs improvement and has started to address this.

Supervising social workers are well supported by their manager and leaders. The service's governance and quality assurance arrangements are effective and systems are in place for the ongoing monitoring and improvement of the service.

Well-being

Arrangements are in place to ensure children can share their views in relation to their care which contributes towards the development of the service. The service employs engagement and participation workers who undertake direct work with children to ensure they are supported to understand their rights and entitlements. They facilitate monthly opportunities for children to meet with other care experienced children and maintain meaningful relationships. Children have opportunities to meet with the supervising social worker during their visits, attend their child looked after (CLA) reviews and are consulted as part of the formal annual review process. The Responsible Individual (RI) engages with children during regular social events, including a recent residential trip.

Children and care experienced young people have created a short film to support new children moving into foster care, to help them settle and feel valued. Information about the service is available for children in a variety of formats to suit their age and level of understanding. A written guide provides information on the care and support children will receive, how their voices are heard and how to raise a complaint. Some policies are available in both English and Welsh. Foster carers have welcome books which include pictures of the home, family members and activities in the local area to support a positive move for children.

Children's education is promoted, the service has high educational aspirations for children and some go on to further education. Foster carers play an active role in supporting children to achieve and reach their full potential. The agency has an education service who monitor and drive positive educational outcomes for children. They advocate and ensure children are receiving the support they need and are entitled to. Children are encouraged to try new activities and interests and are supported to develop new hobbies and join clubs. Children have opportunities to socialise and develop positive friendships.

Children's health needs are promoted and supported. They are registered with local health services and foster carers ensure they attend routine health appointments. The service provider is proactive in ensuring children receive specialist help and support. Some foster carers receive bespoke training to meet children's specific and complex health needs, however, foster carer compliance with first aid training requires improvement. Children are encouraged to be physically active and have a healthy diet. Children's emotional well-being is promoted, the service provider use a therapeutic agency who support foster carers to understand children's needs from a trauma informed perspective. The service is striving to provide individualised therapeutic support. The service also use an animal therapeutic service to support children with their emotional well-being.

Children are cared for by foster carers who are committed and promote their sense of belonging. Foster carers support children to see people who are important to them. Professionals told us TACT Cymru have a unique and strong 'family' ethos. Children go on

holidays with their foster carers and their families, and take part in family weddings. Many children have remained with their foster families after they reach adulthood, in 'When I am Ready' arrangements and beyond. Children are supported to develop their independence skills and foster carers encourage them with daily tasks. 'TACT Connect' provide care experienced adults with access to a supportive community as well as practical assistance.

Care and Support

Managers and supervising social workers consider a wide range of views and information to determine which foster carers and families can best meet the needs of children. When possible, they arrange meetings to ensure an appropriate match and develop plans for smooth transitions. Supervising social workers understand and support their foster carers well. One foster carer told us their supervising social worker is the “*most exemplary social worker I have had the joy of working with*”, another foster carer told us “*TACT have always got your back*”.

Children are cared for by foster carers who can meet their needs. They experience a nurturing and stable home environment and are supported to achieve positive outcomes. Professionals told us foster carers are confident in challenging issues they do not feel are in the best interests of the child. Foster carers told us they are supported to escalate any concerns and make complaints on behalf of children.

The service ensures children have placement plans, risk assessments and safer care plans in place to support foster carers to provide good standards of care and support for children. Safer care plans are specific to individual foster carers and children. These are created when children move into their foster home and are reviewed regularly. We discussed ways this can be improved to include more specific information about children going missing. Supervising social workers identify and are proactive in addressing risks or vulnerabilities. Multi agency meetings are arranged to prevent issues escalating.

Carers assessments are undertaken by a centralised recruitment team and can be undertaken in the Welsh language. A minimum of two home visits per assessment are undertaken and more if required. Most assessments are thorough and comprehensive. We saw one assessment which was detailed however, an analysis of previous relationships was not robustly explored. The skills to foster training is facilitated live online during the assessment process. Foster carers undertake self-directed studies which form part of their assessment. The service has reviewed and evaluated the effectiveness of the above, and feedback has been positive.

Home Safety checklists are completed annually to ensure children are cared for within a safe home environment. Arrangements are in place for ongoing checks of fostering households through annual unannounced visits and regular planned visits by the supervising social worker. The majority of supervisions are completed in the home to ensure the home environment can be seen, including children’s bedrooms.

Children’s progress with their outcomes is measured and monitored. The RI is exploring ways to improve the process and ensure they are more meaningful and accurate.

Some foster carers are not up to date with safeguarding training and the safeguarding policy needs amending. Foster carer and staff core training needs improvement and the service provider has already identified this shortfall and began to address this. There is a foster carer handbook in place which provides foster carers with detailed information about the service.

Environment

TACT is a national charity that provides registered fostering services across Wales, England, and Scotland. TACT Cymru operates fostering services in Wales. The fostering agency has closed all regional offices in Wales, and they have become an all-Wales home-based service. Local community spaces are hired to facilitate face to face carer support groups, children's groups, training and staff team meetings. The service has joined a partnership with other agencies in North Wales to provide strengthened services to this area.

The service is paperless and has an electronic system for records which is password protected with individual access codes. Foster carers are provided with suitable equipment, training and support to assist them with any technical difficulties.

Prospective foster carer assessments are managed by a centralised recruitment team based in England. Assessments can be facilitated in the Welsh language. Foster carers' homes are assessed when they are recruited to determine their suitability in meeting children's needs. The skills to foster training is facilitated live online during the assessment process and most panel meetings and reviews also take place online.

Supervising social workers visit homes routinely during announced and unannounced visits, which provide opportunity to assess the home environment. Standards of health and safety in foster carers' homes are considered as part of the formal annual review process, together with pet assessments to assess safety. Children who live with foster carers personalise their bedrooms which promotes their sense of belonging.

Leadership and Management

The service is operating in line with the statement of purpose (SOP). We discussed additional information which needs to be included. The manager and responsible individual have considerable relevant experience and are suitably qualified and registered with Social Care Wales. Feedback from foster carers and social workers is very positive about the management and leadership of the service. Foster carers told us supervising social workers and the managers are always available to provide advice and or support and they have confidence in the service.

Most of the service's policies and procedures have been reviewed and demonstrate an improved understanding of Welsh legislation and associated guidance. However, the safeguarding policy requires further amending to reflect current guidance. Some policies have been developed in an accessible format for children and these are also available in Welsh.

Foster carers receive regular supervision and feel well supported by the fostering agency. They have regular supervision and overall, find the training offered useful. However, foster carers told us they would like more opportunities for face-to-face training. Foster carers value the out of hours support available and consider the advice and guidance they receive is helpful.

Foster carers complete specific training in relation to the individual needs of children they are caring for, as well as additional training if the type of care they are providing changes. The agency are in the process of upskilling their foster carers and supervising social work staff in trauma informed practices. Foster carers compliance with core training and the system for recording and monitoring foster carer training needs improvement. The RI is in the process of implementing a plan to ensure systems capture training undertaken by foster carers more accurately.

The staff team is supported through a clear line management structure and by the organisation at a local and national level. Although the agency has a long standing and stable team of admin and supervising social work staff, they experienced the loss of two deputy managers in the last year. They have recently appointed an experienced deputy manager from another region in the service. Staff told us they feel valued, well supported and training opportunities are good. Staff have weekly catch ups and regular face to face team meetings. Staff supervision and personal development plan reviews are taking place, records are comprehensive and include a review of progress. Staff can raise and share concerns. Records for staff training also require improvement to demonstrate staff are up to date with core training.

Staff recruitment practices are adequate; references are obtained and verified, and risk assessments are in place for former employers who could not be contacted. Staff files contain a copy of the job description detailing the requirements of the role and evidence of relevant qualifications. Reasons for leaving posts with children or vulnerable adults were recorded in the staff file. Arrangements are in place to ensure disclosure and barring

service (DBS) checks are completed at the point of recruitment and renewed. Risk assessments are completed in relation to offences disclosed as part of this process. However, the service needs to ensure social workers undertaking fostering assessments in Wales, are registered with Social Care Wales.

The service has a panel which is established and experienced although there have been recent membership movement or losses. A new panel chair has recently been appointed and they are actively recruiting for independent members with other specific areas of knowledge. Members are in the process of receiving annual appraisals, after some delay. The agency decision maker is an independent and experienced practitioner and panel chair. Fostering assessments are scrutinised by panel members to ensure foster carers are safe, suitably fit, and competent to undertake the role. Fostering panel records evidence good scrutiny and decision-making for foster carers approval, changes of approval, and when concerns are raised regarding standards of care and support provided to children. Independent social workers undertake foster carer annual reviews, and they are overseen by the agency decision maker.

There are effective governance arrangements in place, which support the operation of the service. Managers have oversight of support being provided to children and foster carers, ensuring supervisions and annual reviews happen regularly. There are also effective quality assurance processes in place to review the standards of care and support provided to children and foster families. RI visits and reports are completed within timescale and include sections for when children/foster carers/staff have been consulted. The quality-of-care review has been completed and includes an analysis of data and references to how this information compares to the previous review period. The review identifies any patterns and trends and areas for improvement.

Summary of Non-Compliance

Status	What each means
New	This non-compliance was identified at this inspection.
Reviewed	Compliance was reviewed at this inspection and was not achieved. The target date for compliance is in the future and will be tested at next inspection.
Not Achieved	Compliance was tested at this inspection and was not achieved.
Achieved	Compliance was tested at this inspection and was achieved.

We respond to non-compliance with regulations where poor outcomes for people, and / or risk to people’s well-being are identified by issuing Priority Action Notice (s).

The provider must take immediate steps to address this and make improvements. Where providers fail to take priority action by the target date we may escalate the matter to an Improvement and Enforcement Panel.

Priority Action Notice(s)

Regulation	Summary	Status
N/A	No non-compliance of this type was identified at this inspection	N/A

Where we find non-compliance with regulations but no immediate or significant risk for people using the service is identified we highlight these as Areas for Improvement.

We expect the provider to take action to rectify this and we will follow this up at the next inspection. Where the provider has failed to make the necessary improvements we will escalate the matter by issuing a Priority Action Notice.

Area(s) for Improvement

Regulation	Summary	Status
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N/A	No non-compliance of this type was identified at this inspection	N/A
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